



State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
California Department of Public Health



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2009 H1N1 Influenza
Updated Guidance for Employers and Employees
on 2009 H1N1 Influenza
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Revision History: Supersedes: "Interim Guidance for Employers and Employees on Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus" (6/24/09)"

2009 H1N1 influenza (also referred to as "H1N1 Influenza," "Novel Influenza A (H1N1) virus," or "swine flu") is a type of influenza virus that causes respiratory disease that can spread between people. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred. For more information on H1N1 (2009) influenza, visit the CDPH website (<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/H1N1Home.aspx>).

Even though the H1N1 influenza virus does not produce severe illness in most people, it is still important that workers and employers take steps to help slow the spread of the disease because our understanding of the virus is still developing. Also, many people in the community have medical conditions that make them more likely to have serious illness if they do get influenza.

The recommendations below will help slow the spread of H1N1 influenza. Please do what you can to protect people in your workplace and your community who are at risk of more serious illness. Many of these recommendations are no different than routine good infection control in the workplace, and are valuable for preventing illness for the yearly seasonal influenza, which can also cause serious illness.

Certain health care and non-health care settings such as hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, clinics, medical offices, delivery of home health care or emergency medical services, prisons, homeless shelters, and laboratories require specific protections for employees under the Cal/OHSA Aerosol Transmissible Diseases (ATD) standard which became effective August 5, 2009. See the section on Special Employee Groups below for additional information.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Below are key recommendations for employees and employers. Additional recommendations and other resources may be found here:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business/> and

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/files/33/cidrap-shrm-hr-pandemic-toolkit.pdf>.

There are several important things everyone should do if they develop influenza-like symptoms.

Influenza-like symptoms include:

a temperature of at least 100° F [37.8° C]

and

recent onset of at least one of the following: runny nose or nasal congestion, sore throat, cough, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, diarrhea, vomiting

What can workers do?

There are a few very important and **simple things everyone can do** to reduce transmission of H1N1 (2009) influenza:

- Wash hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes (cough or sneeze into an arm or shoulder or into a tissue).
- Keep your distance from people who are coughing.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as eating/drinking utensils, toothbrushes, and towels, especially with ill persons.
- Eat well, be active, don't smoke.
- Getting vaccinated is the most important step to protecting against influenza.
 - Learn if you are at high risk for developing H1N1 influenza-related complications (see <http://cdc.gov/h1n1flu/highrisk.htm>). CDC recommends that high risk groups be vaccinated first during the initial period when supplies are limited.
 - For information on seasonal influenza see <http://www.cdc.gov/Flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>.

If you develop influenza-like symptoms you should:

- **Stay at home.**
- Seek medical care under certain circumstances:
 - if you are at high risk for developing influenza-related complications, or
 - if you develop any of the following symptoms: difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure, dizziness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting, or

- if your influenza-like symptoms improve but then return or worsen within a few days.
- Remain at home until at least 24 hours after the fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication [*Fever-reducing medications are medicines that contain acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®), ibuprofen (such as Motrin®), or acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin).*].

If you develop influenza-like symptoms while at work you should:

- Promptly separate yourself from other people and **go home**.

If you are well but you live with someone who has influenza-like symptoms, you should:

- Continue to go to work.
- Monitor your health daily for the development of influenza-like symptoms.
- If you are at high risk for influenza-related complications, contact your health care provider to determine if you are a candidate for preventive antiviral medication.

What can employers do?

There are a few very important and **simple things every employer can do** to reduce transmission of H1N1 (2009) influenza:

- **Advise sick workers to stay home** until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- **Encourage sick workers to go home.** Employees who appear to have a influenza-like illness upon arrival or become sick during the work day should be promptly separated from others and encouraged to go home.
- Encourage employees to obtain the seasonal and H1N1 influenza vaccines if it is appropriate for them according to CDC recommendations (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/index.htm>).
- Encourage employees to learn if they are at high risk for developing influenza-related complications (<http://cdc.gov/h1n1flu/highrisk.htm>).
- Post signs to inform employees, clients, and customers about symptoms of influenza and preventive measures (such as the poster found here (http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/2009-10/pdf/Take3_Poster.pdf)).
- Promote good hygiene practices for employees, clients, and customers including: washing hands often with soap and water (or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer) and covering coughs and sneezes. Post signs in the workplace informing people of these practices. Posters addressing these issues can be found here <http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/materials.htm>.
- Maintain a supply of face tissues, hand hygiene products (soap and water, alcohol-based hand sanitizer) and no-touch disposal receptacles and make them available throughout the workplace to employees, clients, and customers.
- Encourage employees who develop influenza-like symptoms to seek medical care if they are:

- At high risk for developing influenza-related complications (Gathering of personal information for the purposes of pandemic planning and response must be done in a fashion that is compliant with all applicable rules and regulations, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A short technical assistance document is available at <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/h1n1.html>), or
 - Experiencing any of the following symptoms: difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure, dizziness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting, or
 - If influenza-like symptoms improve but then return or worsen within a few days.
- Frequently clean all commonly touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label. No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended. For additional information on cleaning surfaces to prevent H1N1 (2009) influenza transmission see <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/CDPH-H1N1SurfaceCleaning.pdf>.
- Increase outdoor air ventilation, for example by opening windows, or if feasible by increasing the outdoor air supply rate (reducing recirculation) in heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems.
- Prepare flexible leave policies that permit and encourage employees to miss work due to illness, because they need to care for others who are ill, or because of school or child care program closures.
- Do not require a doctor's note for workers to validate an illness or to return to work, as individuals with mild symptoms are encouraged to stay home and not seek medical care.
- Plan ways for essential business functions to continue despite increased employee absences.

If you employ people whose jobs entail visiting facilities that may house individuals with influenza-like symptoms (e.g., clinics, hospitals, long-term care facilities, congregate living facilities):

- Reschedule non-essential visits.
- Instruct employees to remain outside of areas in which patients with influenza-like symptoms are located.
- If visits must be conducted, provide training, personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, respirators, where appropriate) to reduce transmission, and ensure that hand hygiene facilities are available.
- Employees who do this kind of work may be subject to the Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Diseases (ATD) standard. For more details about the ATD standard or its applicability to your workplace, see <http://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5199.html> and <http://www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH/SwineFlu/SwineFlu.htm>.

SPECIFIC EMPLOYEE GROUPS

In addition to the recommendations made above that apply to **ALL** workplaces, there are some additional recommendations that may be implemented for specific work settings where employees may be at higher risk of H1N1 influenza infection because of frequent contact with clients and/or the public.

On August 5, 2009, the new Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Diseases (ATD) standard (Title 8 CCR Section 5199) took effect. For the purposes of the ATD standard, H1N1 (2009) influenza is considered a “novel” aerosol transmissible pathogen. The ATD standard requires specific protections for employees in certain health care and non-health care settings such as hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, clinics, medical offices, delivery of home health care or emergency medical services, prisons, homeless shelters, and laboratories. Employers and employees covered under the ATD standard will need to obtain more information than is covered in this guidance document. For more details about the ATD standard or its applicability to a particular workplace, see <http://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5199.html>. For more information about H1N1 (2009) influenza and the ATD standard, see <http://www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH/SwineFlu/SwineFlu.htm>.

Health Care Workers:

Recommendations for health care workers or for people who frequently enter health care facilities as part of their job can be found on the CDPH website at:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/H1N1-ICGuidanceHealthCareSettings.pdf>. Individuals who work in these settings may be subject to the Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Disease (ATD) standard. For more details about the ATD standard or its applicability to your workplace, see <http://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5199.html> and <http://www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH/SwineFlu/SwineFlu.htm>.

Schools, Childcare, and Daycare Settings:

Recommendations for people who work in schools, childcare, and daycare settings can be found here:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/H1N1Schools.aspx>.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CDC 2009 H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) Home Page:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

CDC H1N1 Information for Businesses and Employers:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business/>

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CDPH H1N1 (2009) Influenza Home Page:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/H1N1Home.aspx>

CDPH H1N1 Information for Businesses and Employers:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/H1N1Employers.aspx>

Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Diseases (ATD) Standard:

<http://www.dir.ca.gov/title8/5199.html>

Cal/OSHA H1N1 (Swine Flu) Guidance for Employers and Employees:

<http://www.dir.ca.gov/DOSH/SwineFlu/SwineFlu.htm>

Center for Infectious Diseases Research and Policy “Doing Business During an Influenza Pandemic Toolkit”:

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/files/33/cidrap-shrm-hr-pandemic-toolkit.pdf>

Federal OSHA Employer and Employee Guidances:

<http://www.osha.gov/h1n1/index.html>

National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences H1N1 Response Training Tool:

http://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/public/hasl_get_blob.cfm?ID=8349